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ABSTRACT

This collection of abstracts is part of a continuing series providing information on recent doctoral dissertations. The 10 titles deal with the following topics: (1) the importance of written communication in business as viewed by executives in a metropolitan area, (2) communication processes and organizational structure as mechanisms of organizational control, (3) using the dimensionality reduction technique to measure organizational conflict, (4) modeling dyadic mode choice in organizations, (5) defensive and relational communication correlates of the termination interview, (6) organizational climate and externally imposed innovation, (7) organizational effectiveness, (8) alignment talk in the job interview, (9) burnout in a human services organization from the communication perspective, and (10) a comparison of the effectiveness and efficiency of communication strategies as stimulants of horizontal communication among independent, interrelated organizational units. (FL)

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Business and Organizational Communication

Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations Published in Dissertation Abstracts International, January through June 1982 (Vol. 42 Nos. 7 through 12)

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Abstracts of the following dissertations are included in this collection:

Cost, Doris Lemmers
THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS AS VIEWED BY EXECUTIVES IN A METROPOLITAN AREA

Garthright-Petelle, Kathleen Mae
COMMUNICATION PROCESSES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AS MECHANISMS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL: A CONTINGENCY PERSPECTIVE

Guy, Mary Ellen
MEASURING ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT: THE DIMENSIONALITY REDUCTION TECHNIQUE

Irving, Richard Harold
MODELING DYADIC MODE CHOICE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Michal, Paula Marie Smithson
DEFENSIVE AND RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION CORRELATES OF THE TERMINATION INTERVIEW

Nelson, Barbara Kay
ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND EXTERNALLY IMPOSED INNOVATION: A CASE STUDY OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND COMMUNICATION PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Olshfski, Dorothy Farr
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: DEFINING A CONSTRUCT SPACE AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

Ragan, Sandra Lee
ALIGNMENT TALK IN THE JOB INTERVIEW

Ray, Eileen Berlin
A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE ON BURNOUT IN A HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATION

Yeager, Jack B.
A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AS STIMULANTS OF HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION AMONG INDEPENDENT INTERRELATED ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS AS VIEWED BY EXECUTIVES IN A METROPOLITAN AREA

Order No. 8202694

COST, DORIS LEMMERS, ED.D. *University of Northern Colorado*, 1981. 138pp.

Statement of the Problem. This study was undertaken to determine the importance of written communication in business as perceived by executives.

General Procedure. A random-stratified sample was selected of 30 large, 30 medium-sized, and 30 small firms in the Denver metropolitan area. Interviews were conducted using an interview schedule designed and pilot tested in the study. Data from the interviews were collected, analyzed, and summarized to answer the eleven questions raised in the study.

Results. Written communication is very important to business executives. On a scale of 1 (extremely important) to 7 (of no importance), the mean rating was 1.87.

The means of the 21 writing elements ranged from 1.48 to 3.04 on the 1-to-7 scale of importance.

Writing elements were ranked as follows: clarity, problem analysis, conciseness, organization of data, spelling, language level or readability level, word choice, coherence, grammar, sentence structure, positive attitude, tone, technical vocabulary, reader viewpoint, transition, paragraphing, punctuation, capitalization, style, use of active voice and/or passive voice, parallelism.

More large business firms have programs or policies for developing writing skills of employees than do medium-sized and small firms.

On a scale of 1 (extremely good) to 7 (extremely poor), executives rate the general writing skills of recent college graduates 4.17.

Eighty of the 90 executives (88.89 percent) believe that all college graduates should be required to pass a competency test in writing skills before being awarded bachelor's degrees.

There is a significant difference in the ratings of the importance of effective writing with executives of large firms rating it as being more important than executives of small firms.

There is no significant relationship between the ratings of the importance of the writing elements and size of the firm.

Conclusions. Effective written communication is very important to business executives, with 55.56 percent rating it extremely important.

All 21 writing elements are important in all business firms.

Large business firms place more emphasis on the importance of written communication than do other firms.

Business executives are not satisfied with the writing skills of recent college graduates.

COMMUNICATION PROCESSES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AS MECHANISMS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL: A CONTINGENCY PERSPECTIVE

Order No. DA8208351

GARTHRIGHT-PETELLE, KATHLEEN MAE, PH.D. *The University of Nebraska - Lincoln*, 1981. 230pp. Adviser: William J. Seiler

This study investigated communication processes and organizational structure as mechanisms of organizational control. Literature with respect to organizational structure and organizational control was reviewed and integrated into a contingency model of organizational control.

The review of organizational structure research revealed two major variables operate as organizational control mechanisms: formalization and standardization. Standardization and formalization were considered planned mechanisms of control because these mechanisms provide the boundaries for acceptable organizational behavior.

In contrast, communication processes were categorized as emergent control mechanisms. Communication processes were expected to emerge in response to situational contingencies, to control organizational behavior. Two major factors were presented as aspects of the organization's communication control process: communication climate and information flow.

While both planned and emergent processes were considered necessary for organizational control, task and environmental uncertainty and interdependence were expected to determine the optimal strategy for organizational control. High uncertainty of task and environment were expected to decrease the usefulness of standardization and formalization and increase the need for communication processes as mechanisms for organizational control. Low uncertainty would be expected to increase the usefulness of planned mechanisms for control. A contingency model was developed to depict these relationships.

The model was subjected to a partial test. Two hypotheses were tested: (H_1) Under high task uncertainty, unit effectiveness will be positively related to unit climate and information flow; and (H_2) Under low task uncertainty, unit effectiveness will be positively related to unit formalization and standardization.

Data was collected from 28 task units of a state agency. Results of the data analysis indicated support for the first hypothesis. In 19 task units identified as having high task uncertainty, unit effectiveness was significantly related to information flow and climate.

The second hypothesis failed to receive support. In the nine task units designated as having low task uncertainty, unit effectiveness was not significantly related to standardization and formalization. These findings were discussed in relation to the contingency model of organizational control.

MEASURING ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT: THE DIMENSIONALITY REDUCTION TECHNIQUE

Order No. DA8212242

GUY, MARY ELLEN, PH.D. *University of South Carolina*, 1981. 202pp.

This research introduces the dimensionality reduction technique and demonstrates its utility for measuring organizational conflict. This technique quantifies one's preference orderings into an n-dimensional geometric figure which represents the resulting feasible solution space. When one member's orderings are compared to another's, the resulting reduction in dimensions represents the amount of incompatible orderings.

Three hypotheses regarding conflict in organizations were tested using this technique. The first was that conflict would be less within a hierarchical level than across hierarchical levels. The second was that conflict would be less within a professional discipline than across disciplines. And the third was that conflict would be less within unit groupings than across groupings.

The research site was a large state supported psychiatric hospital. Fifty-four members of the clinical staff were selected as respondents, according to their respective loci within the hospital. Each respondent was asked to complete a questionnaire which was in the form of a 26 x 26 matrix in which each element i,j was scored according to which factor, i or j, was more important, or at least equal to, the other factor.

Preference orderings were found to differ according to one's hierarchical level, unit grouping, and to some extent, professional identification. Those staff at the top levels of the organization tended to agree with one another more than did those staff at the lowest level. According to professional identification, there was significantly more conflict within physicians as a group and within nurses as a group than within any of the other disciplines. It is noteworthy that social workers had less conflict than did other professions, and tended to mitigate conflict when combined with other disciplines. The hospital is divided into 5 units: 4 treatment units and an administrative unit. The findings indicate that personnel within the administrative unit had more similarity of preference orderings with each other than did personnel within the treatment units. And, respondents in the 4 treatment units tended to agree more with those in the administrative unit than with those in other treatment units.

This research is a significant contribution to the discipline because it introduces and demonstrates a new quantitative method for researching conflict and because it presents findings which challenge current theories of the professional bureaucracy.

MODELING DYADIC MODE CHOICE IN ORGANIZATIONS

IRVING, RICHARD HAROLD, PH.D. *University of Waterloo (Canada)*, 1981.

This thesis considers the problems of modeling organizational mode choice. Using the theories of Distance, Richness, Social Presence and Ego-Defensive Communication as a basis, a framework for analysis was developed which allowed the comparison of situational requirements to mode capabilities.

Analysis showed that a global model of mode choice was superior to either a naive model or to any single model in predicting mode preferences in specific situations.

For predicting the mode most likely to be chosen a simple model consisting of distance and content complexity was found to be best. Furthermore, Distance was the primary factor in the prediction of mode choice.

DEFENSIVE AND RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION CORRELATES OF THE TERMINATION INTERVIEW

Order No. DA8209755

MICHAL, PAULA MARIE SMITHSON, PH.D. *University of Denver*, 1981. 138pp.

This descriptive study determined some factors perceived by managers as contributing to defensive termination interviews and examined the validity of the relational termination dimensions cited by Knapp (1978) for employment terminations. Fourteen major organizations participated in the study. Forty-eight managers participating in critical incident interviews and responding to a questionnaire generated from key concerns of management writers, Gibb (1961) and Knapp (1978) ranged from first-line supervisors to corporate vice-presidents. The critical incident interview data first was analyzed based on categories emerging from the incidents, then all incidents were sorted into categories to determine the strength of each category. Questionnaire data was subjected to a X^2 analysis (alpha = .05).

Those significant questionnaire and critical incident items most closely related to non-defensive interviews were: consideration of the time of day of termination; calm manager behavior; following a plan of action; employees were described as pleasant, good listeners, and agreeable; brief employee tenure with the company; interviews were viewed as more focused, flexible, efficient, and smooth; a cause of termination was poor job performance; employees anticipated termination; managers' feelings were positive; and employees agreed with the manager's issues.

Items perceived by managers as most related to defensiveness were: experiencing high stress in making the decision to terminate; being surprised by employee's response to termination; describing the employee as unpleasant, as a poor listener, and disagreeable; interviews were viewed as difficult to focus, rigid and formal, difficult and awkward; a cause of termination was interpersonal incompetence; employees refuted the managers' issues; and negative manager feelings.

Results can be viewed as clarifying managers' perceptions of the termination interview and affirming the applicability of Knapp's dimensions of deteriorating relationships to employment termination study. Practical implications of the study include: the value of making managers aware of other managers' perceptions of the nature of the termination interview as a phenomenon and providing a base for future consideration of the termination interview as a subject to be studied.

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND EXTERNALLY IMPOSED INNOVATION: A CASE STUDY OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND COMMUNICATION PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Order No. DA8209846

NELSON, BARBARA KAY, PH.D. *University of Colorado at Boulder*, 1981. 205pp. Director: Associate Professor George A. Matter

Legislation requiring organizations to adopt and implement affirmative action has existed for nearly a decade. Despite a power-coercive strategy used by the federal government to achieve equality for women and minorities in the workplace, substantial nationwide progress has not occurred. Previous literature has suggested that success with affirmative action depends upon the organizational climate.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether factors of organizational climate were associated with success in implementing affirmative action. More specifically, this research identified characteristics of the management and communication systems utilized by an organization which has adopted and implemented affirmative action.

Data were gathered from three subgroups of a large metropolitan community college. A stratified random sampling procedure was used to select 35 employees from each organizational group: administration, faculty, and classified. Each group was evaluated according to quantitative progress in meeting affirmative action goals and ranked from most successful (administration) to least successful (faculty). Interviews with twelve employees supported this ranking. The 105 subjects completed two instruments--the Likert Profile of Organizational Characteristics and the Communication Audit Questionnaire Survey. Responses were compared statistically to determine whether and how ths three groups differed.

Results indicated that organizational climate and success with affirmative action implementation were associated. Significant differences between administration and faculty were particularly evident. Higher scores by administration indicated that the management system was more participative. According to Likert's four systems of management, the administration experienced a Consultative style, while faculty experienced a Benevolent Authoritative style. Higher scores by administration on the Questionnaire Survey indicated that the communication processes were more satisfying and effective. A lack of adequate and timely information for the faculty through formal communication channels created a reliance upon the grapevine.

This research suggested that the organizational climate which seemed best to facilitate the implementation of affirmative action was characterized by a Consultative management system, openness, trust, esprit de corps, satisfying reward and recognition mechanisms, an adequate amount of timely information, predominant use of interpersonal and group communication, and reliance on formal versus informal sources of information.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: DEFINING A CONSTRUCT SPACE AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

Order No. DA8210539

OLSHFSKI, DOROTHY FARR, PH.D. *Temple University*, 1981. 176pp. Supervisor: Dr. Harry A. Bailey

Organizational effectiveness has been a theme in the practical and theoretical organizational literature since Adam Smith, but there is still no agreed upon definition of organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, there is no agreement among researchers on an approach to measuring effectiveness, the appropriate criteria to be used or a method of weighting the criteria of organizational effectiveness. There is a need to specify domain, or operating space for the organizational effectiveness construct which would facilitate operationalizing the construct and, also, allow the approaches to measurement and the organizational effectiveness criteria to be grouped according to some overriding organization scheme. The present study is an attempt to define an operating space for organizational effectiveness at the individual level of analysis.

The research strategy employed in this study compares the work being done in two other topics in Public Administration (representative bureaucracy and public personnel administration) which focus on the individual level of analysis with the research conducted in organizational effectiveness. The literature in these three areas should demonstrate a reasonably consistent theoretical perspective that can guide analysis and aid in understanding the individual in the organization. But the organizational effectiveness literature does not reflect the theoretical perspective underlying the complementary work in representative bureaucracy and public personnel administration. Presently, at the individual level of analysis, organizational effectiveness is measured using standard personnel variables (absenteeism, lack of conflict, turnover, etc.) and these indicators of effectiveness cannot accommodate non-traditional, non-hierarchical management systems.

This study derives the independent variables and the hypotheses to be tested from the representative bureaucracy and public personnel administration literature. . . . (Author's abstract exceeds stipulated maximum length. Discontinued here with permission of school) UMI

ALIGNMENT TALK IN THE JOB INTERVIEW

Order No. DA8208239

RAGAN, SANDRA LEE, PH.D. *The University of Texas at Austin*, 1981. 277pp. Supervisor: Robert Hopper

Twelve job interviews--six simulated and six actual interviews--were analyzed to investigate how communicators use alignment talk in job interview conversations. The term alignment refers to metacommunicative talk used to remedy problems. Alignment talk coordinates speakers with each other and also displays roles and norms. Several alignment devices have been described in ethnomethodological studies that demonstrate how talk accomplishes action and defines social situations for communicators. The present study practices a method of conversational analysis derived from ethnomethodology.

Although various aligning features have been discussed in the sociological and ethnomethodological literature (e.g., accounts, disclaimers, remedial processes, side sequences, meta-talk), few studies have either (a) looked at naturally occurring situations, or (b) looked at several speech devices simultaneously. The job interview was chosen as a locus for alignment talk for this study both because it is a significant interpersonal communication genre and because it appeared to be a context in which alignment would occur, both to promote positive impressions and to manifest the roles of interviewer and applicant.

Seven types of alignment features were identified and coded in the twelve job interview transcripts. Categories included: accounts; formulations; meta-talk, side sequences, metacommunicative digressions; qualifiers, and "you knows." A qualitative investigation of the use of each of these aligning actions revealed the following: (1) Interviewers' use of alignment showed a pattern of dominance in that they frequently used aligning features which directed or controlled the interview conversations, especially formulations, side sequences, metacommunicative digressions, and some forms of meta-talk. (2) Applicants' use of alignment displayed tentativeness and powerlessness in that they utilized primarily forms of alignment talk which typified them as nonassertive or defensive speakers, especially qualifiers, "you knows," and accounts.

In sum, different uses of alignment talk created, enacted, and preserved the different statuses of interviewer and applicant. Implications of this finding for job applicants in the interview situation are: (1) Applicants need to realize how their talk reflects inferior status. (2) Applicants might be advised to use fewer of the speech forms that reinforce this inferiority and more assertive speech forms that might partly equalize the roles of interviewer and applicant.

A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE ON BURNOUT IN A HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATION

Order No. DA8212617

RAY, EILEEN BERLIN, PH.D. *University of Washington*, 1981. 155pp. Chairperson: Professor Terrance L. Albrecht

This dissertation study tested a causal model of burnout in a human service organization under the theoretic framework of Linear Force Aggregation Theory and social structure. Specifically, it investigated the direct effects of network integration, job-related stress, and cognitive distance on burnout. It was further hypothesized that the effects of network integration and job-related stress were mediated by the cognitive distance between one's perception of him or herself and his or her job.

Data were collected at two points in time, with an approximate two week interval between collections. One hundred and nine employees of a children's hospital voluntarily participated in the study.

Data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation, ordinary least squares regression, and structural equation modelling. A test of the overall model yielded a non-significant chi-square. However, only the direct path of job-related stress to burnout was significant. When the model was respecified to test this one path, the model fit the data. An examination of the difference between the two models revealed no significant change. These results suggest that the original model can be reduced to include only this one direct path. Thus, this study provided empirical support for the conceptual definition of burnout as a reaction to chronic job-related stress.

This study makes several contributions to the burnout literature. First, it emphasized a communication perspective under an explicit framework. It also extended previous operational definitions of both job-related stress and network integration. In addition, it utilized a methodology not typically found in burnout research. Structural equation modelling provided a rigorous test of the model by examining the relationships between all of the variables simultaneously.

Several limitations of this study should be considered. These include a lack of control in the data collection procedures and possible selective sample attrition. There were also questions of validity for the scales measuring cognitive distance and network integration.

Theoretic and pragmatic implications of this study are offered and the need for more basic research is advocated. Finally, modifications of this study for future research are discussed.

A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AS STIMULANTS OF HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION AMONG INDEPENDENT INTERRELATED ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

Order No. DA8207284

YEAGER, JACK B., PH.D. *The Ohio State University*, 1981. 96pp. Adviser: Professor Victor D. Wall

This document describes a comparative field study of the effectiveness and efficiency of several communication strategies designed to stimulate horizontal information exchange among work units in a research and development organization. Three strategies were employed in an experimental design, each using variations in level of feedback, managerial involvement, and form. Comparisons were made on two organizational levels using both statistical and qualitative data comparisons. The results indicate both a need for the exchange of information horizontally and the importance of feedback, brevity, and informality in such exchanges. Additionally, the level of implementation within the organization of such strategies was shown to be an important factor in the overall usefulness of this type of information exchange.